

LAST THINGS NO. 667

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 31, 1865,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“At the last.”
Proverbs 5:11*

THE wise man saw the young and simple straying into the house of the strange woman. The house seemed so completely different from what he knew it to be, that he desired to shed a light upon it, that the young man might not sin in the dark, but might understand the nature of his deeds. The wise man looked abroad, and he saw but one lamp suitable to his purpose; it was named, “At the last,” so, snatching this, he held it up in the midst of the strange woman’s den of infamy, and everything was changed from what it had been before—the truth had come to light, and the deceptive had vanished. The young man dreamed of pleasure, in wanton dalliance he hoped to find delight; but when the lamp of, “At the last,” began to shine, he saw rottenness in his bones, filthiness in his flesh, pains and griefs and sorrows, as the necessary consequence of sin, and, wisely guided, wisely taught, the simple-minded started back and listened to the admonitions of the teacher, “Come not near the door of her house, for her gates lead down to the chambers of death.”

Now, if this lamp of, “At the last,” was found so useful in this one particular case, I think it must be equally useful everywhere else, and it may help us all to understand the truth of matters, if we will look at them in the light which this wonderful lamp yields. I can only compare my text in its matchless power to Ithuriel’s spear with which, according to Milton, he touched the toad and straightway Satan appeared in his true colors. If I can apply my text to certain things today, they will come out in their true light; “At the last,” shall be the rod in my hand with which I shall touch tinsel, and it shall disappear, and you will see it is not gold, and I will touch varnish and paint and graining, and you shall understand that they are really what they are, and not what they profess to be—the light of, “At the last,” shall be the light of truth, the light of wisdom to our souls. It seems to me a fitting occasion for holding up this light this morning, when we have come to the end of the year and shall, in a few short hours, be at the beginning of another. This period, like Janus, has two faces, looking back on the year that is past and looking forward on the year that is to come, and my four-sided lamp will perhaps gleam afar. I wish that you may have courage enough to look down the vista of the years that you have already lived, and think of everything that you have thought, and spoken, and done. And then I hope you will have holy daring enough to let the same light shine forward on the years yet to come, when your hair will be gray, and the teeth shall fail, and they that look out of the windows shall be darkened. We will, then, examine the past and the future of life in the light of, “At the last.” May it teach us wisdom and make us walk in the fear of God.

I have said that my lamp has four sides to it, and so it has—we will look at it first in the light which streams from death.

I. DEATH is at the last. In some sense, it is *the* last, of this mortal life; it is the last of our period of trial here below; it is the last of the days of divine grace; it is the last of the days of mortal sin. The tree falls when we die, and it sprouts not again; the house is washed from the foundations, and it is built no more if it has been founded on sin. Death is the end of this present life. And how certain is it to all of us! This year, we have had many tokens of its certainty. One might almost compose an almanac for the year 1865, and put down the name of someone of note at least to every month, and I should scarcely exaggerate if I said to every week, in the year. All ranks and classes have been made to feel the arrow of the insatiable archer. From royalty down to poverty, the grave has been glutted with its prey. Not late in the year, there fell one whose benevolence mingled with wisdom had blessed our land and who, being dead, is still remembered by the needy, because he cheapened their bread, and broke down the laws which,

while they might have fattened the rich, certainly would have impoverished the poor. His wisdom could not spare him, and though he is embalmed in the hearts of thousands, yet to the dust he has returned. Swiftly after him there fell one who ruled a mighty people in the flush of victory, when what threatened to be a disruption and a separation had ended in triumph to one side, and the nation seemed as if it were about to start on a fresh course of prosperity. By the assassin's hand he fell. Whatever question there might have been about him in his life, all men conspired to honor him in his death. The ruler of a nation, who could subdue a gallant and a mighty foe, could not subdue that old foeman who conquers whom he wills. Abraham Lincoln died as well as Cobden. And there was he who had saved many precious lives by warning mariners of the approaching storm, and thus many a ship had remained in harbor and been delivered from the merciless jaws of the deep, but he could not forecast or escape himself the last dread storm; he, too, must go down into that fathomless deep which swallows all mankind. Then, when the year was ripe and the flowers were all in bloom—fit season for his going—there was taken away the man who has garnished our nation with objects of beauty and of joy, a man who loved the flowers and sleeps beneath them now. Like flowers, he withered as all of us must do—Sir Joseph Paxton died. Then in the month of September, when the year began to wane, three men at least who had walked with their staff to heaven and read the spheres, astronomers who predicted eclipses and told of comets, men of fame and name—three fell at once. They might tell the eclipse, but they, themselves, must be eclipsed; and they might foretell the track of the comet, but they, themselves, are gone from us just as those meteoric stars are gone. Then you will remember well, when the year had waned, grown old, it is but a day or two ago, that all were startled by the death of that young old man who had ruled our nation so long and, on the whole, so well. We shall not forget that he was taken away from us, who was in some respects, a king throughout our land. Wisdom, cheerfulness, youthful strength such as he possessed could not avert the time of death. And then, as if the muster roll were not complete, as if death could not be satisfied till the year had yielded up yet another grave, we heard that the oldest of monarchs had been taken away; and though his goodness and his wisdom had guided well the little nation over which he ruled, and given him an influence far more extensive than his own sphere, yet death spared him not, and Leopold must die. It has been a year of dying rather than of living, and you may look upon yourselves and wonder that you are here. Some, greener than we are, have been cut down. You who are ripe, are you ready? It is marvelous that, although so ripe, you should have been spared so long.

Now, in the light of all these deaths, I want you to look upon mortal sins. They sculpture angels upon gravestones sometimes; then, let each angel from the gravestone speak to us this morning, and we will listen to his words, for wise and solemn they will surely be, and worthy of our notice, as if he had risen from the dead.

Let me take you upstairs to your own dying chamber, for there, perhaps, the lamp will burn best for you. Look at actions which you have thought to be great, and upon which you have prided yourself—how will they look at the last? You made money; you made money fast; you did the thing very cleverly; you praised yourself for it, just as others have praised themselves for conquering nations, or forcing their way to fame, or lifting themselves into eminence. Now, you are dying, and what do you think of all that? Is it as great as it seemed to be? Oh, how you leaped up to it, how you strained yourself to reach it, and you have got it, and you are dying. What do you think of it now? The greatest of human actions will appear to be insignificant when we come to die, and especially those upon which men most pride themselves—these will yield them the bitterest humiliation. We shall then say what madmen we must have been to have wasted so much time and energy upon such paltry things. When we shall discover that they were not real, that they were but mere bubbles, mere pretences, we shall then look upon ourselves as demented to have spent the whole of our life and of our energy upon them.

Let us look at our selfish actions in that light. A man says, "I know how to make money, and I know how to keep it, too"—and he prides himself that he is not such a fool as to be generous, nor such a simpleton as to give either to God or to the poor. Now, there he lies. Ah, do you know how to keep it now? Can you take it with you? Can you carry so much as a single farthing of it across the river of death? You are come to the water's side—how much of it will you carry through? Ah fool! How much wiser had you been if you had laid up your treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts! You called such men fools when you were living. What do you think of them now that you are dying? Who is the

fool, he who sent his goods beforehand, or he who stored them up here to leave them everlastingly? Everything that is selfish will look beggarly when we come to die; but everything which, in the sight of God we have done for Christ's sake that has been generous, and self-denying, and noble, will, even amidst the vaults of death, sparkle with celestial splendor. Some of you have been, during this week, giving to the cause of God right generously, for which I thank you—I think I may also do it in my Master's name—and when I have thought of it, I have said to myself, “Surely, when they come to die, they shall, none of them, regret that they have served the cause of God. Ah, if they have even given to the pinching of themselves, it shall be no source of sorrow when they come to the dying bed, that they did it unto one of the least of God's little ones.” Look at your actions in the light of death, and the selfish ones shall soon pass. I would also, dear friends, that some of you would look at your self-righteousness in the light of death. You have been very good people, very upright, honest, moral, amiable, generous, and so on, and you are resting on what you are. Do you think this will bear your weight when you come to die? When you are in good health, any form of religion may satisfy, but a dying soul needs more than sand to rest on. You will need the Rock of Ages. Then, let me assure you that in the light of the grave, all confidence, except confidence in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, is a clear delusion! Fly from it, I beseech you. Why will you repose beneath a Jonah's gourd that will die before the worm? Seek a better shelter—cling to the Rock of Ages; find the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The same, I may say, of all confidence in the efficacy of ceremonies and sacraments. When we are in good health, it seems a sufficiently satisfactory thing to have been baptized, and to have taken the sacrament, and to go to church, and read prayers and all that—and one can get some little water out of those wells while one is strong and joyous. But when you come to be sick and to die, let me tell you, sacraments will be nothing to you! Baptism and the Lord's Supper will alike deceive you, if you rest on them. When you come to die, you will find them to be supports too frail to bear the weight of an immortal soul's eternal interests. It will be in vain when you lie dying, if God gives you a quickened conscience, to say, “I went to church or to meetings so many times a day.” You will find it a poor bandage to your soul's wounds to be able to say, “I made a profession of godliness.” Oh, your shams will all be torn away from you by the rough hand of the skeleton, death; you will need a real Savior, vital godliness, true regeneration—not baptismal regeneration! You will need *Christ*, not sacraments; and nothing short of this will do, “At the last.”

And, dear friends, let me ask, as I hold up the light, how will sin appear when we come to die? It is pleasant now and we can excuse it, calling it a small thing, a little trivial mistake, a juvenile error, and imprudence, and so on; but how will sin appear when you come to die? The grim ghosts of our iniquities, if they have not been laid in the grave of Christ Jesus, will haunt our dying bed. That ghastly chamberlain, with fingers bloody and red, will draw the curtain round about us. What a horrid prospect, to be shut in with our sins forever, to be dying with no comrades about the bed to comfort, but with the remembrances of the past to terrify and to alarm!

Think, I pray you, not only upon the root and principle of evil, but upon the fruit of it. Remember that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Do not consider what the thing looks like today, but what will it be in the end? You warm the viper in your bosom, but how will you bear its sting when you shall come to lie upon your last bed? The sea, I know, is smooth and calm to you for a moment; but remember, there are storms, there are hurricanes that sweep it; and what will your poor boat do without Christ for its Pilot when the dread storm of death shall come? I wish I could, in imagination, take you down, down, down to the waters of death, where you shall feel your feet sinking in the dread sand of uncertainty, and hear the booming of the distant sea, and your spirit shall begin to ask, “What is that ocean that I hear?” And there shall come back an answer, “You hear the breaking of the everlasting waves; the bottomless sea of eternity is that to which you are descending.” You shall feel its chill floods as they come from the ankles to the knees, and from the knees to the loins; and you will find it, (if you are without Christ), not a river to swim in, but an ocean to be drowned in forever, *forever*, FOREVER! Oh, may God help you to look at present joys, and actions, and thoughts, and doings in the light of death! What a contrast there is often between the life of man and his death! You would praise some men if you only saw their lives, but, when you see their deaths, you change your mind. There is Moses—he may be the King of Egypt, but he gives up royalty and all its tempting joys. On the mount, it is offered

to him to be made the founder of a mighty race—a desire always prominent in the eastern mind, but, instead of desiring himself to be made a great nation, he, unselfishly, desires even to be blotted out of the Book of Life if God will but spare his people Israel. And what does Moses get for it all? His only earthly reward is to be the leader of a crew of slaves who are perpetually rebelling against him and vexing the Holy Spirit. Now, there is Balaam, on the other hand. He has visitations from God; and when Balak, the son of Zippor, begs him to curse Israel, he cannot, though he is quite willing to go as far as he can. He is compelled, by the inward Holy Spirit, to bless the people, but, after he has done that, for gain and for reward, he plots a plan against Israel by which they were cursed—he bids them send out the women of Moab to lead astray the children of Israel. Now, there he goes, with his treasures of silver and gold, back to his own house, and the shrewd and busy worldly man says, “That is the man for me—do not tell me about your meek Moses, who is afraid of doing this and that, and will not look after the main chance. He has thrown away a kingdom, and now he has thrown away the chance of being the head of a nation. That is the man to make money—Balaam. He will be a common counselor, or an alderman, or lord mayor one day—that Balaam! A man must not stick too much at things; he must go ahead and make hay while the sun shines—

*“There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.”*

That is the man for me who knows when to launch out on the waters and who does not ask if they are dirty or clean if they only waft him onward to wealth and success.” Ah, but they come to die, and Balaam dies—where? He had prayed, “Let my last end be like his”—like the righteous—and he died in battle, fighting against the righteous and against the God of the righteous! And hard by that very spot, Moses also died and you know how—with visions of Canaan upon his eyes melting into visions of the Canaan which is above—the New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. In that death, who would not be Moses, let who will be Balaam in life? Be it yours and mine to aspire to be like Moses, both living and dying. “At the last!” Think of that, and whenever you are tempted by sin, or tempted by gain—look at it—“At the last!” “At the last!” God help you to judge righteous judgment!

II. And now, we will turn to the second side of our lantern. The second of these last things is JUDGMENT. After death the judgment. When we die, we die not. When a man dies, shall he live again? Yes, that he shall—for his spirit never dies. God has made us such strange wondrous beings, with such wide reaching hopes, and such far darting aspirations, that it is not possible we should die and become extinct. The beast has no longing for immortality. You never hear it sigh for celestial regions—it has no dread of judgment, because there is no second life, no judgment for the beast that perishes. But the God who gives to man the dread of things to come, and makes him feel and long after something better than this small globe affords us, cannot have mocked us, cannot have made us more wretched than the beast that perishes, by giving us passions and desires never to be gratified. We are immortal, every one of us, and when the stars go out and Sol’s great furnace is extinguished for lack of fuel, and, like a vesture, God’s wide universe shall be rolled up, we shall still be living a life as eternal as the Eternal God Himself! Oh, when we leave this world, we are told that after death there comes a judgment to us. I do not know how it is with you—you may be more accustomed to courts of justice than I am—but there always creeps a solemnity over me, even in a common court of justice among men, and especially, when a man is being tried for his life. Laughter seems hushed there, and everything is solemn. How much more dread will be that court where men shall be tried for their eternal lives—where their souls—rather than their bodies, shall be at stake? The judgment of one’s fellows is not to be despised. A bold good man can afford to laugh at the world’s opinion, but still it is trying to him, for one’s fellows may be right—multitudes of men, if they have really thought upon the matter, may not all be wrong. It is not easy to stand at the bar of public opinion, and receive the verdict of condemnation; but what will it be to stand at the bar of God, who is greater than all, and to receive from Him the sentence of damnation? God save us from that!

Let us think of this judgment a moment. We shall rise from the dead—we shall be there in body as well as spirit. These very bodies will stand upon the earth at the last day—when Christ shall come and the trumpet shall sound. His people shall rise at the first resurrection, and the wicked shall rise, also, and in their flesh shall they see God. Let me think of all that I have done then in the light of that. There will

be present every man who has ever lived on earth. How shall I like to have all my doings published there? My very thoughts—how shall I feel when they are read aloud; what I whispered in the ear in the closet—how shall I like to have that proclaimed with the sound of a trumpet? And what I did in the dark—how shall I care to have that revealed in the light? And yet these things must be made known before the assembled universe. There will be present there my enemies. If I have treated them ill, if I have been a backbiter, a slanderer, it will be then declared—if I have been a hypocrite and a dissembler, and made others think me true when I have been false, then I shall be unmasked. Those I have injured will be there. With what alarm will the debauchee see those whom he has seduced stand with fiery eyes to accuse him there! With what horror will the oppressor see the widow and the fatherless, whom he drove to poverty, stand there as swift witnesses against him to condemnation! If I have spread false doctrine, a moral pestilence destroying human souls, my victims shall be there to gather round me in a circle and, like dogs that bay the stag—will, each of them, demand my blood! They shall all be there, friends and foes; more solemn still, “He” shall be there—the man of men, the grandest among men, because God, as well as man, and if I have despised and rejected His salvation, I shall then see Him in another fashion and after another sort—

*“The Lord shall come! But not the same
As once in lowliness He came—
A silent Lamb before His foes,
A weary man, and full of woes.
The Lord shall come! A dreadful form,
With rainbow-wreath and robes of storm,
On cherub wings and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind!”*

How will you face Him, you who have despised Him? You who have doubted His Deity, how will you bear the blaze of it? You rejected and trampled on His precious blood, how will you bear the weight of His almighty arm? When on the cross you would not receive Him, and when on the throne you shall not escape from Him. That silver scepter which He stretches out now to you, if you refuse to touch it, shall be laid aside, and He will take one of another metal—a rod of iron—and He shall break you in pieces! Yes, He shall dash you in pieces like potters’ vessels. And God shall be there, manifestly there—that God who is here this morning, on the last day of this year, and who sees your thoughts and reads your minds at this moment, but who is so invisible that you forget that He fills this place and fills all places; you shall not be able to forget Him then. Your eyes shall see Him in that day; you shall understand His presence. You will try to hide from Him; would desire hell itself, and think it a place of shelter, if you could escape from Him; but everywhere His fire shall encircle you, shall consume you, for “Our God is a consuming fire.” You shall no more be able to escape from yourself than from God. You shall find Him as present with you as your own soul will be, and you shall feel His hand of fire searching for the chords of your soul, and sweeping with a doleful *Miserere* all the heart strings of your spirit. Misery unspeakable must be yours when the voice of the God-man, shall say, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell.”

I would to God that you would look at all your actions in the light of the day of judgment. Our secret thoughts, let us turn them over this morning; they have been lying by till they are moldy—let us bring them forth today. My thoughts, how will you look in the light of judgment? My professions, my imaginations, my conceptions, how will they all be when the judgment day shall gleam upon them? My profession, how does that look? I have been baptized in Christ professedly. I wear a Christian name. I preach the gospel. I am a Church officer or a Church member. How will all this bear the light of that tremendous day? When I am put in the scales and weighed, shall I be the weight that I am labeled? In that dreadful day, shall I see the handwriting on the wall, “Mene, Tekel, Upharsin”—“You are weighed in the balances and found wanting”? Or shall I hear the gracious sentence which shall pronounce me saved in Jesus Christ? As to my graces, what must they be in the light of judgment? My own salvation, all the matters of experience and knowledge—how do they all look in that light of God? I think I have believed—I think I love the Savior—I sometimes hope that I am His—but am I so? Shall I be found to be a true believer at the last? Will my love be mere hypocrisy or true affection? Will my graces be mere

talk, or will they be found to be the work of God the Holy Spirit? Am I vitally united to Christ or not? Am I a mere pretender, or a true possessor of the things eternal? Oh, my soul, set these questions in the light of that tremendous day! I would to God we could now go forward to the day of judgment, in thought at any rate; and since I feel myself quite unable to lead you there, let me adopt my Savior's words—He says that the day comes when He shall separate the righteous from the wicked, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. There shall be some on His left hand to whom He shall say, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; sick and in prison, and you visited Me not. Depart, you cursed." Will He say that to you and to me? There will be some on His right hand to whom He will say, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." Shall He say that to you and to me? The one or the other it must be.

As I stand here this morning, I seem to feel, on my own account, and I wish you all did on yours, what a certain man in court once felt. Sentence was about to be given in his case, or, at least he thought the case would be called on immediately, and he rushed to his solicitor and he said, "Is there one thing left undone? Are you sure? For if I lose this case, I am a ruined man." His face was white with anxiety. And so it is with you. Is there one thing left undone? For if you lose this case at God's judgment seat you are a ruined man! Come hearer, have you believed on Christ Jesus, or is faith left undone? Have you given up self-righteousness? Have you left your sin? Have you given your heart to the Savior? Is regeneration still unaccomplished? Are you born-again? Are you in Christ? Are you saved? If your case is lost, you are a ruined man! A man ruined here may still retrieve his fortunes. The bankrupt may start again, and yet be rich. The captain who has lost a battle may renew the fight and win the next victory and begin the campaign anew. But lose the battle of life, and the fight shall be no more. Make bankruptcy in this life's business, and you have no more trading. This is the business of eternity! Soul, is there anything left undone? Brother, sister, is there anything left undone? For if you lose this case, you are ruined, and that to all eternity! I pray you to look at this day and at all your days, past and the future, in the light of the day of judgment.

III. But my lamp—this matchless lamp—has a third side to it, bright, gleaming like a cluster of stars. The third of the last things is HEAVEN, the portion, I trust, of many of us. We hope, when days and years have passed, that full many of us will meet to part no more on the other side of Jordan, in heaven. Now, let us see if we can cast a little light from heaven upon the things present and the things past. You have been toiling—toiling very hard, and wiping the sweat from your brow and saying, "My lot is not a desirable one; oh how weary I am; I cannot bear it." Courage, brother! Courage, sister! There is rest for the weary. There is eternal rest for the beloved of the Lord, and when you shall arrive in heaven, how little, how utterly insignificant your toil will seem, even if it shall have lasted threescore years and ten! You are pained much; even now pain shoots through your body; you do not often know what it is to have an easy hour and you half murmur, "Why am I thus? Why did God deal so harshly with me?" Think of heaven, where the inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick," where there are no groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Courage, tried one! It will soon be over! It is but a pin's prick, or a moment's pang, and then eternal glory! Be of good cheer, and let your patience not fail you. And so you have been slandered. On your face, for Christ's dear name, shame and reproach have been cast, and you are ready to give up. Come, man, look before you! Can you not hear the acclamations of the angels as the conquerors receive, one by one, their eternal crowns? What? Will you not fight when there is so much to be won? Must you be carried to the skies on flowery beds of *ease*? You must fight if you would reign! Gird up the loins of your mind, and have respect to the recompense of reward. In the light of heaven, the shame of earth will seem to be less than nothing and vanity! And so you have had many losses and crosses—you were once well-to-do—but you are now poor. You will have to go home today to a very poor abode and to a scanty meal. Oh, but beloved, you will not be there long. "In My Father's house are many mansions." It is but an inn you are tarrying at awhile, and, if the accommodation is rough, you are gone tomorrow—so complain not! I would to God we could look upon all our actions in the light of heaven—I mean those who are believers in Jesus Christ. If we could have regrets hereafter, I think it would be that we did not do more than we did for Christ here below. In heaven, they cannot feed Christ's poor, cannot teach the ignorant. They can extol Him with songs of praise,

but there are some things in which we have the preference over them—they cannot clothe the naked, or visit the sick, or speak words of cheer to those who are disconsolate. If there is anything that can give joy in heaven, surely it will be in looking back on the divine grace which enabled us to serve the Master! Oh, if I can win souls to Christ, I shall be a gainer as well as you! I shall have another heaven in their heaven, another joy, as it were, in their life, and another happiness in their souls' happiness. And, dear brethren, if in your Sunday school teaching, or visiting, or talking to others, you can bring any to glory, you will, if it is possible, multiply your heaven, and make it all the more glad and joyful! Now, look at the life of some Christians. They come here, and if I preach what they call a good sermon, they like it and drink it in. They are willing to eat the fat, and drink the sweet, but what do they do for Christ? Nothing! What do they give for Christ? Hardly anything. There are a few such among us, and these are generally the most miserable people you meet with—neither a comfort to others, nor any joy to themselves. Now, even in heaven, I think, though no sorrow should be there, it will be only God's wiping it away that will keep them from regretting that they did not do what they might have done on earth! We are saved by grace, blessed be God—by grace alone—but, being saved, we do desire to make known the savor of Christ in every place, and we believe in heaven we shall have joy in having made this known among the sons of men. Look at your joy in the light of heaven, and you will make it other than it now looks.

IV. We now turn to the fourth of the four last things, and that is, let us look at all things in the light of HELL, that dread and dismal light, the glare of the fiery abyss. Bring that lantern here. Here is a young man very merry. "Ho! Ho!" he sings, "Christians are fools." Hold my light up. There you are without God, without hope, with the great iron gate of death shut upon you, and barred forever, your body in the flames of Tophet, and your soul in the yet more horrible flames of the wrath of God. Who is the fool now? Oh, when your spirits are damned, as they must be if you live without a Savior, you will think laughing a poor thing. Laugh now, sir! Scoff now! For a few minutes' merriment you sold eternal joys. You had a mess of pottage and you ate it in haste, and you sold your birthright. What do you think of it now? It is an awful thing that men should be content, for a few short hours of silly mirth, to fling away their souls. Look at merriment in the glare of the flames of hell. Mark that man in agony down in the vault of hell. He made money by sin, and there he is; he gained the whole world and lost his own soul. How does it look now? "I would give 30,000 pounds," said an English gentleman when he lay dying, "if any man would prove to me to a demonstration, that there is no hell." Yes, but if he had given 30,000 *worlds*, that could not be proved, and now, with unutterable pangs, he knows it is so. What would you give, when once you are lost, if you could throw back your gains? If lost spirits could return here, surely they would do what Judas did—throw down the 30 pieces of silver in the temple, and curse themselves that they ever took the gain of this world and destroyed their souls.

And how will unbelief look in the flames of hell? There are no infidels anywhere but on earth—there are none in heaven, and there are none in hell. Atheism is a strange thing. Even the devils never fell into that vice, for, "The devils believe and tremble." And there are some of the devil's children who have gone beyond their father in sin, but how will it look when they are forever lost? When God's foot crushes them, they will not be able to doubt His existence. When He tears them in pieces, and there is none to deliver, then their deceptive conclusions, their empty logic, their brags and bravadoes will be of no use! Oh, that they had been wise, and had not darkened their foolish hearts, but had turned unto the living God!

And, my dear hearers, I have another thought which will come home to some of your spirits with peculiar power. How will *procrastination* seem when once you get there? Some of you have been attending this place a long time—you have often had impressions, but you have always said, "By and by." "By and by." You have been awakened, and awakened again, but still it has been, "Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow." How will tomorrow ring in your ears when once you are lost? What would you not give for another day of mercy, another hour of divine grace? I feel, this morning, as if I would do with you what the Roman ambassadors did with Antiochus. They met him, and asked him whether he meant war or peace. He said he must see; and one of them, taking his staff, made a circle round him where he stood, and said, "You must answer before you leave that spot. If you step out of that, it is war. Now, war or peace?" And I, too, would draw a secret circle round you in the pew this morning, and say to you,

“Which shall it be, sin or holiness, self or Christ? Shall it be grace or enmity, heaven or hell?” And I pray you answer that question in the light of hell. It is a dread light, but it is a revealing one. It is a fire that will devour the scales that are about your blind eyes. God grant that it may scorch those scales away, that you may see now how dreadful a thing it is to be an enemy to God, and be led by His Holy Spirit to apply to Jesus Christ even now. Ah, how will the gospel seem in the light of hell, and how will your indifference to it seem?

When I was thinking of preaching this morning, I wished that I could preach as in that light. To think that there are some to whom I have spoken again and again, who during this year have passed away from the world of hope, we fear, into the land of despair, is a dreadful thought! Persons that occupied these pews, sat in these aisles, stood far away there, and listened and heard the gospel—and they are gone! Did I warn them fairly, truly? If not—“If you warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at your hands.” My God, by the blood of the Savior, set me free from these men! Oh, deliver me from that solemn condemnation! But with those of you that still live, I would be clear of you. Dear hearers, do you not feel that you are mortal? Have not you within you a sense that you are dying? It is a thought that is always with me. Life seems so short. It was not so always with me—but the shortness of life now seems to hang over my mind perpetually, and I suppose it must do so over those of you who are thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty, and who frequently see your friends taken away. Now, since you must soon be gone, since there is a world to come, and you believe there is, how can some of you play with these things? How is it that while you are attentive to your business, you leave your soul’s business neglected? What are you waiting for, my hearer? Are you waiting for another season? Does not God say, “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation”? What are you waiting for? Does not the time past suffice? Oh, that you were wise, and would think of your latter end, and seek after God! I entreat you, by the shortness of life, by the certainty of death, by the terrors of judgment, by the glories of heaven, by the pains of hell—seek after the right way and walk in it. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is the gospel, “Whoever believes is not condemned.” To believe is to trust. Oh, that you may have divine grace to trust your souls with the Lord Jesus now and forever, and then we shall not need to fear those words, “At the last,” nor the light of the four last things, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

God bless you, for His name’s sake.

*“Soon the whole, like a parched scroll,
Shall before my amazed sight unroll,
And without a screen at one burst be seen,
The presence wherein I have ever been.”*

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 148; 2 Corinthians 6.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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END OF VOLUME 11.